BOOK REVIEW

LAÍN ENTRALGO, P., editor: *Historia Universal de la Medicina. Tomo II: Antigüedad Clásica.* Barcelona, Salvat, 1972. xviii, 306 pages; numerous illustrations. Price: $21 ($147 for complete set of 7 volumes).

Doctor Pedro Laín Entralgo, professor of the history of medicine at the University of Madrid, is editing a huge *Universal History of Medicine.* This opus is to occupy seven volumes. The volume under review covers classical antiquity and is the second to appear.

The 11 chapters and their authors are as follows: Synopsis of Classical Antiquity, Antonio Tovar; Science in the Greco-Roman World, Desiderio Papp; Pre-Socratic Thought and Medicine, José S. Lasso de la Vega; Hippocratic Medicine, P. Laín Entralgo; The Great Greek Philosophers and Medicine, José Lasso de la Vega; Verbal Psychotherapy in the Works of Plato, D. Gracia Guillén; Hellenistic and Hellenistico-Roman Medicine (300 B.C. to 100 A.D.), F. Kudlien; Medicine in the Etruscan World, M. Tabanelli; Galen, Luis García Ballester; Post-Galenic Medicine, Magnus and Pia Schmid; Sociology of Medical Practise in Ancient Rome, Vincenzo Busacchi.

This list makes clear the excellent plan of the book. A discussion of the general background of classical antiquity leads to a discussion of Greco-Roman science, which in turn takes the reader to the thought and the medicine of the pre-Socratic philosophers. The remaining chapters follow approximately in chronological order. Descriptions of background are adequate but have not been permitted to overpower the foreground.

As might be expected, one of the most prominent and important chapters is that by Professor Laín Entralgo on Hippocratic medicine. This magisterial contribution discusses successively the origin of Hippocratic medicine; its concept of "physiology" (in the ancient sense); Hippocratic ideas concerning man; diagnostics; therapeutics; ethics; and the inner diversity of the Hippocratic writings.

It is instructive to study Professor Laín's method. A skilled and experienced teacher, he excels in the clear formulation of problems, which are presented as series of questions. For example, in discussing the origin of Hippocratic medicine, he asks: What happened in the Greek world during the sixth century and the first half of the fifth century

so that Hippocratic medicine arose during this period and from this period? How did the intellectual foundations and main outlines of this kind of medicine develop on soil of that kind, from the time of Alcmaeon of Croton until the death of Hippocrates? The reply to these questions is divided into four numbered sections, which take up: (I) the historic soil of the Hippocratic exploit, (II) the eve of that exploit, (III) the participants, and (IV) the developing literary expression.

In discussing the soil on which Hippocratic medicine arose and from which it originated, Professor Laín stresses the diverse wealth and rich diversity of the archaic Greek mixture of empiricism and magic, its lack of dogmatism, and the implied belief that some divine element in the nature of things had imposed firm limits on the action of magic. Having identified these elements, he feels that they are conjointly inadequate to account for the creation of a naturalistic and technical kind of medicine. The additional factor, he judges, consists of the changes which "colonial life"—caused by migration—produced in the mentation and social habits of the Greeks. In this context, colonial life is the formation of the *polis*, with all that this involved with respect to freedom, independence, and a money economy.

It is in the nature of historical explanation that Professor Laín's clear and convincing analysis, admittedly influenced by Arnold J. Toynbee, is difficult to prove or to refute. Certainly Laín would seem to have answered his own questions to the extent that an answer is possible.

The longest chapter in the volume under review deals with Galen and was contributed by the youthful Dr. Luis García Ballester, who heads the Department of the History of Medicine in the University of Granada. After recounting the story of Galen's life and listing his works, this author proceeds to discuss the fundamentals of Galen's medical knowledge, his ideas of anatomy, general and special physiology, pathology, and therapeutics.

Early in his chapter García Ballester says:

> The first thing that attracts attention when one attempts to make a synthesis which includes Galen's life and work is the disproportion that exists between the importance which all manuals of medical history attribute to his work and to his historical significance, and the scarcity of important and extended studies of his personality, his writings, and his historical dominance. This

> disproportion embraces all the sciences which have as their object the writings of the physician of Pergamum, from philology to the history of medicine itself.

To the evidence adduced in support of this contention I may add the decades of subtotal neglect by the Loeb Classical Library, which has consented only recently to broaden its repertoire of ancient medical authors.

In discussing Galen's conception of physiology, García Ballester explains the basic Galenic notions of movement, nature, and cause—including the teleological aspect. He then points out the dominance of substance, which he contrasts with the importance of relation in modern physiology. I am not certain to what extent this contrast can be defended.

Psyche, *dunamis*, and *pneuma* are then considered; this is followed by an adequate exposition of special physiology, of Galenic pathology, and of Galenic therapeutics. The total effect is impressive. The explanation of the various types of cause and the presentation of Galen's refusal to regard disease as divine are especially satisfactory.

The long chapter on Galen is preceded by a welcome short chapter. This is a discussion of Etruscan medicine by Professor Mario Tabanelli of the University of Milan.

Tabanelli inevitably points out the utter scarcity of *testimonia* concerning Etruscan medicine. After citing the few available bits, he infers that since the medical school of Croton was in full vigor in the fourth century B.C., when the Etruscans occupied part of Campania, interrelations between the Etruscans and the nearby Greeks must have existed. Therefore it is considered probable that, side by side with a crude and primitive Italic system of medicine, there was at Rome an Etruscan system, more advanced, and equipped with a degree of scientific knowledge. In part this inference is based on a passage in Cicero.

Tabanelli surmises that the Romans probably received medical knowledge from the Etruscans before turning to the Greeks for further indoctrination. In this connection he mentions Arcagathus, a Greek who practiced medicine in Rome and is portrayed on a coin that was described in the *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* by Dr. Adrian Zorgniotti.*

*Zorgniotti, A.: Medical Numismatic Notes IV. A denarius commemorating Rome's first doctor, Arcagathus (219 B.C.). *Bull. N.Y. Acad. Med.* 46:448-50, 1970.

The principal part of Tabanelli's paper discusses anatomical knowledge revealed in Etruscan works of art, anatomical portrayals in *ex voto* figures, and the soothsayers (*haruspices*) and the unsolved problem of their anatomical knowledge. The final paragraphs discuss rare effigies depicting either obesity or ascites, surgical instruments of uncertain provenience, therapeutic springs, and medicinal plants. The brief chapter conveys a maximum of valuable information, most of it unfamiliar.

The final chapter was written by the eminent Dr. Vincenzo Busacchi, professor of the history of medicine at the University of Bologna, and is titled "The Sociology of Medical Practice in Ancient Rome."

Early in his essay Professor Busacchi mentions the apparent absence of physicians from early imperial and republican Rome. He interprets this to mean a lack of trained and learned physicians; it is to be supposed that lay healers were not lacking.

He then considers Marcus Porcius Cato the Censor (234-149 B.C.) who, in his treatise *De Agri Cultura*, advised that old sick slaves be sold off, like sick animals or wornout equipment. A bit of evidence is offered as an indication that Cato was not as inhuman as has been thought, but I do not find that this suffices to reverse the judgment of the centuries.

Professor Busacchi contrasts Cato's hostility toward physicians—which extended also to philosophers and to Greeks—with the later and more enlightened opinions of Cicero. It is evident that the level and the scope of the Roman civilian medical profession had risen during the century which came between Cato and Cicero. The change is associated with the influence of the Greek physician Asclepiades, who migrated to Rome to practice medicine in 91 B.C. Further increases in the prestige of physicians are said to have occurred in the days of Celsus and of Scribonius Largus.

Professor Busacchi's chapter contains interesting additional information on such subjects as the Roman family, Roman military and naval medicine, surgical instruments, and divination. His analyses are rewarding.

Thus far I have not mentioned the most obvious fact about Professor Laín Entralgo's volume—the profusion of striking photographs (almost 200, nearly all in color) drawn from archaeological sites, libraries, and museums in many countries (see Figures 1 and 2). Often

Fig. 1. Cover of an Etruscan urn depicting an obese person. From the Etruscan museum at Chiusi. Laín Etralgo, *Historia Universal de la Medicina,* vol. 2, p. 200.

these illustrations are strikingly beautiful; in many instances they are also instructive.

Such being the case, it is painful to report that, as might have been expected, the book embodies certain Latin and Mediterranean traditions of publication and not the Anglo-American tradition. Since there is no alphabetical index, it is difficult to find specific items in the text, although the detailed table of contents is somewhat helpful. Since there are no running heads, it is necessary to turn the leaves of a chapter one at a time in order to find terminal references.

Evidently no bibliographical standard was set: each author handled the references in his own way. Tovar's chapter, for example, mentions Meillet, Herter, Kirk, and Seneca, but these names are not accompanied by references. At the end of Tovar's chapter there is a weighty bibliography that contains 43 entries, most of which are not directly connected to specfic passages in the text. Four of the 43 entries end in a parenthetical statement: *existe traducción española*—a Spanish translation exists. If it exists, why was the reference not given?

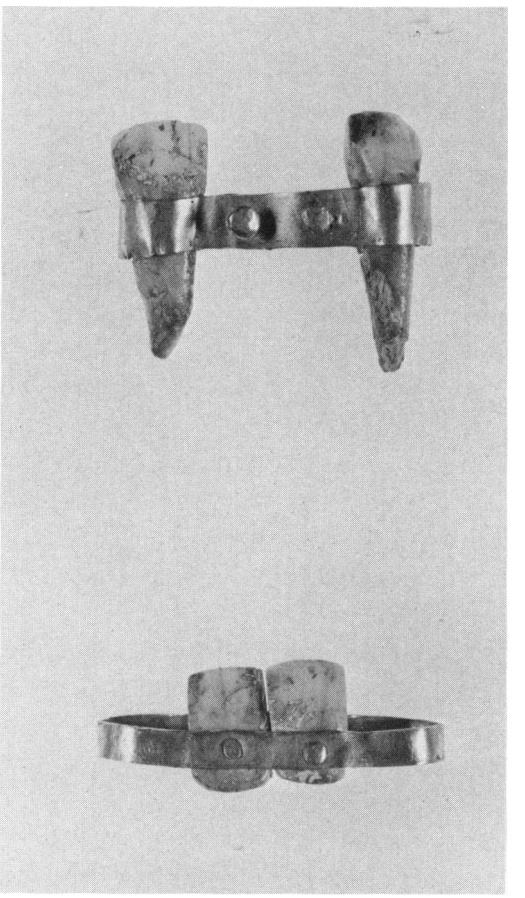

Fig. 2. Two Etruscan dental prostheses. Laín Entralgo, vol. 2, p. 204.

Tovar's bibliography includes authors' initials; Papp's does not. Lasso de la Vega gives extensive annotations, keyed properly to reference numbers in the text; in addition he gives a classified list of references arranged by subjects. Other authors give occasional parenthetical references in the text, and nothing else. The illustrations, for all their magnificence, are not keyed to specific passages in the text, but apparently were inserted as items of general background or adornment. This is the technique of the coffee-table picture book and does injustice to the excellent authors.

In short, the editors failed to impose proper standards, and the serious reader is the loser.

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